

Lana Gordon, Secretary

Sam Brownback, Governor

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 19, 2014

For More Information Contact:

Barbara Hersh, KDOL
785-296-0901
Barbara.hersh@dol.ks.gov

Governor Proclaims January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month

TOPEKA, Kan. – Kansas Governor Sam Brownback, along with Attorney General Derek Schmidt, Secretary Phyllis Gilmore, Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF), Secretary Lana Gordon, Kansas Department of Labor (KDOL), Secretary Ray Roberts, Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) and Interim Secretary Susan Mosier, Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) have proclaimed January as Human Trafficking Awareness Month in Kansas.

"I take seriously the fight against human trafficking," Governor Sam Brownback said. "We have trained more than 500 child welfare professionals about human trafficking rings making Kansas a national model for preventing this horrendous crime."

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which victims are lured, forced, or coerced for the purpose of commercial sex, debt bondage or forced labor. Kansas' location and interstate system make it a major transportation area for victims of human trafficking.

"It's up to each person in the community to identify and report suspected commercial sexual exploitation of a child," DCF Secretary Phyllis Gilmore said. "These children do not choose to be exploited; they are children who deserve our protection."

The number of human trafficking victims served by victim service agencies through the state that received grants from the Attorney General's office was 338 in fiscal year 2014; this is up from 218 in 2013.

"Kansas has adopted new laws that seek to protect and rescue human trafficking victims – especially children," Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said. "Kansas now has increased penalties and put in place other measures to enhance the prosecution of traffickers and buyers in a comprehensive effort to reduce sexual exploitation and other trafficking statewide."

The bill defines commercial exploitation of children, which does not require a showing of force, fraud, threat or coercion and references the existing statutory definition of human trafficking and aggravated human trafficking.

"House Bill 2034 strengthened our ability to prosecute labor traffickers, but it is still a big problem," KDOL Secretary Lana Gordon said. "While we have made immense strides with the bill, we cannot stop there and need to continue fighting. If you or someone you know is working under unfair conditions, report it."

Labor trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion.

“The Kansas Department of Health and Environment works to protect the health and ensure the safety of all Kansans. Victims of human trafficking are especially vulnerable,” said Acting Secretary Susan Mosier, M.D. “We work to protect these victims by educating schools and other partners on the signs of human trafficking in addition to regulating the facilities in which they are placed.”

The Governor along with the Attorney General’s office, DCF, KDHE, KDOC and KDOL are working together to educate Kansans about the presence of human trafficking, what to look for and how to report suspected human trafficking. Educational information is provided on the agencies’ websites.

“The Kansas Department of Corrections is pleased to be an active participant in the human trafficking task force,” KDOC Deputy Secretary Terri Williams said. “The task force has given us the opportunity to work with juveniles, many of whom are both offenders and victims, through a cooperative, unified interagency forum that involves trauma-informed care.”

For more information on Human Trafficking go to <https://ag.ks.gov/childrens-safety/human-trafficking>.

###

